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MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY LOOKING FOR SPONSORS TO HONOR
NATIVE AMERICAN MILITARY VETERANS WITH SPECIAL EXHIBIT

The Montana Historical Society is scheduling the Smithsonian Institution's "Native Words, Native Warriors" exhibit for venues across the state to honor Native Americans and all veterans for their service to their country.

"We are welcoming sponsors who want to be associated with this important project," Society Director Richard Sims said. "This is a rare opportunity to honor Montana's Indian veterans, and all veterans, as well as to honor the important work of retaining native languages."

The Smithsonian created this exhibit to tell the remarkable story of Indian Marines and soldiers from more than a dozen tribes who used their coded native languages as a weapon against U.S. enemies.

The Navajo code talkers during World War Two have received the most recognition, but the exhibit shows that Native Americans were first enlisted to relay messages using their own languages during World War One.

Marines and soldiers from the Assiniboine, Sioux, Navajo, Hopi, Kiowa, Comanche, Choctaw, Cherokee, Meskwaki, Creek, Chippewa, Cree, Sac and Fox, Oneida, Menominee, and Seminole nations all served as code talkers.

In addition to examining the development of the code and battlefield experiences, the exhibit also deals with the irony Native Americans faced as they transitioned from Indian boarding schools, where they were punished for speaking their native languages, to being honored for using language as a vital secret weapon in combat.

The Society enjoys this unique opportunity as an official Smithsonian Institution Affiliate. Montana Historical Society Board of Trustees member George Horse Capture of Great Falls initiated this exhibit when he was a Smithsonian curator, and will serve as guest curator of the Montana exhibit.

In addition to honoring all Montana Indian veterans including code talkers, the exhibit would recognize the service of all Montana veterans and the National Guard during the nation's international wars and conflicts.

With the help of sponsors and contributors, the Society will launch the exhibit with a premier in Helena during April 2010.

The exhibit would then be taken on the road to venues on Montana's eight Reservations across the state. Montana has traditionally been a leader among the 50 states in percentage of military enlistments from Indian country.

The Society is already working with tribal veterans' representatives and tribal councils who would contribute their own ways of honoring and celebrating their warriors during each four-day event.

The budget for creating and presenting the traveling exhibition across the state is projected at \$35,000-\$40,000. For more information on sponsorship opportunities or individual contributions call Sims at 406-444-1799. The Society needs your help to honor all our great veterans.